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COMPLETE COVERAGE OF SCHOOL NEWS

by

Sylvia E. Bowman

Adviser to "The Northerner" of North Side High School,
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Complete coverage of school news by the school newspaper depends upon 1. an alert newstaff and upon 2. organization. For this reason, I should like to discuss first the news staff of the paper and the qualities it should possess to facilitate coverage of school events and incidents.

Last semester my news editor placed a large sign above her desk which read, "Bread is the staff of life but that is no reason that this news staff should loaf all of the time." The news staff of any paper is truly the staff of life; it is the news that makes the paper what it is and that makes it valuable to the school which it serves. And the paper, if it has any excuse for being, must serve the school. As Joseph C. Carter has said, the school newspaper is a public relations medium for it interprets the needs, aims and achievements of the school. If the publication is providing the right kind of publicity, if it is selling the school to the public, it must be sure to sell the *whole* school.

To do this, to cover the school completely, an energetic news staff must have not only the famous "nose for news" but eyes and ears that are open. Besides being always on the alert for news (besides the information contained in the story assigned) the good news reporter should have what I shall call the four C's of a good reporter: he must be 1. conscientious, 2. courteous, 3. considerate, and 4. cognizant.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

If the reporter is to serve his paper well, both in his meeting of the deadline and of his public, upon whom news stories are dependent, he must be conscientious in keeping his appointments, in obtaining facts, and in writing his stories so facts will be truthfully and clearly presented. In order to do that, he must leave no questions unasked; he must take nothing for granted; he must do no guessing; he must be sure that he has accurate information before he begins to write his story.

A few weeks ago one of our reporters inadvertently created an embarrassing situation between two members of our faculty because he had not been accurate in the use of a seemingly harmless appository phrase. The story had to do with a girls' basketball team tournament which one of the women physical education teachers was directing; she had given the reporter the story. When the reporter wrote the story she said that the teacher was the director of girls athletics. Since the teacher was the junior member of the department and since she was not the head of the department, as the phrase

would indicate, she was greatly embarrassed by the incident for she feared that the senior member of the department would feel that she was assuming a position not hers.

A week or so before that we had had trouble with another patron who was highly incensed because one of our reporters had written that one of our girls had had the leading role in a civic theater play a year ago. The woman called to tell me that her daughter had had that role and that she wanted justice done. Once again, a reporter had not been conscientious in his reporting.

So, in newswriting don't use your imagination to supply missing details. Check all information you use and be sure that people are not only properly identified but that their names are correctly spelled. Nothing will burn up Mr. S-M-Y-T-H-E faster than to have his name spelled S-M-I-T-H!

When one is dependent upon the faculty of the school and upon the administration for a great deal of one's news, one needs to be conscientious as well as courteous in the keeping of appointments. The attitude of the student reporter when he goes to get the facts for a story will have a great influence upon the completeness of the story received and upon the teacher's attitude toward the paper forever afterwards.

If the reporter is not to alienate the affections of the faculty, appointments should be kept promptly and the reporter should have ready a list of questions that he wants to ask and pencil and paper with which to record the answers. He should make the appointment at a time convenient for both the teacher and himself. We have discovered on our staff that the best time is early in the morning before the bell rings; then the teacher is not already overwhelmed with her other duties. After school is a poor time, for then the teacher usually has remedial work, or papers to grade, or is intent on getting away as soon as possible. Furthermore deferring the getting of the story defers the writing and this in turn delays the copy staff and the editors.

Consideration of the reading public and of the subject of the news story is also essential. The good news story should be as concisely written as possible and the reporter should strive for a clear accurate account that will present the news as it is--is not biased in any way or colored so as to misrepresent the facts. No news item should get in the paper that would be damaging to any student's reputation or to the school. School newspapers exist to serve the school and to sell it to the public; every reporter should consider himself partially responsible for the opinion patrons of the school are going to get of the school by reading the paper. He should remember too that what he writes goes beyond the classroom; since the whole world may read it, it should be as good as he can make it.

COOPERATION

The alert reporter, besides being conscientious, courteous, and considerate, must also be cognizant--by that I mean aware of a news story when he hears it. He must be able to see its potentialities for the paper. A good reporter, if a student has been injured in an accident, who is in his home room, will report this fact to his editor or write the story. If he hears, while at his locker, that such and such a club is planning a party, he should report that to the news editor lest the one who is assigned to that beat or run not have heard of it. No opportunity for a news item should be overlooked or considered insignificant.

The good news staff will seek to cooperate with every department of the school and with all its student and its faculty members. It should, however, receive the cooperation of the rest of the staffs of the paper in that all the members of the paper should report to the news editor any information they pick up at random that might aid in the complete coverage of the news.

And what are the rewards for the good reporter who is courteous, conscientious, cooperative, and cognizant, and considerate? He is a successful reporter who is a joy to

his paper and one who is able to find joy in his work. As Evelyn Shuler, a top woman reporter, says, not only does the good reporter find the newspaper business the most fascinating in the world but he finds it this because he is thrown into contact with all varieties of human beings. The reporter learns, she says, "That most people are pretty swell; and that nothing on earth is so important, so interesting and so romantically significant as the simple truth." And Evelyn Shuler should know for she covered the Hauptmann trial and interviewed Post, Pershing, George Arliss, and many notables in her search for news in the twenty years she was a reporter.

WHAT IS SCHOOL NEWS?

But, what is school news? What is to be covered by the news reporters of the school paper? Anything that concerns anyone in the school, any graduate of the school, or patrons of the school that have a close connection with it through the parent teacher organization, for an example, is school news. All future events, all past events, and all current events should be covered. This means not only the main events but also what students too often consider the side-show events of school life: the regular courses and departments. All this means coverage not only of dances but of class news, intramural sports, sports, teacher activities, parent-teacher activities, all repairs on the buildings, all club programs that are being given, and any personal news items that have news value.

There is also a body of foreign news that has value to the schoolpaper and this type consists of scholarship stories, contests, news of graduates--such as where they are going to college, any appointments they have received, their marriages, their professions--and news that has to do with such things of the student world as lodges, student congresses, and activities that some members of the school may be participating in--if they are not closed fraternal organizations.

SOURCES

What are the sources of news of this calibre? Material for the scholarship stories can usually be obtained from circulars sent to the dean and to the principal if they are not sent directly to the school papers. Stories of contests--such as essays, airplane models, or model engines--may be obtained from material sent to the school or from news items about them in the local papers.

There are several sources for news about former students. Teachers and administrators may be sources for they receive letters frequently from former students. Brothers and sisters in the school are a second source; they are always glad to turn in such items if they are encouraged by publication of items received. Newspapers of the city should be the third source; our staff takes all papers of our city and every day some member of the staff goes through them with a fine-tooth comb and cuts out any item that has to do with any graduate, any one in the school, any mention of the school, and of its teachers or its many organizations. The stories are rewritten, other material is gotten, such as--if it is a graduate,--the clubs he was in and his interests from the files in the dean's office. In this way, a paper may carry news about its graduates rather completely.

Why should it, you may ask? It should because the paper is read by patrons of the school and by teachers who were, some of them, acquainted with the persons and because most of them have relatives of some degree still in the school. Also, any honor won by any student casts a good reflection upon the school whether the person is still enrolled or is a graduate.

ORGANIZATION AND NEWS GATHERING

For complete coverage of the school news, the staff should be divided into the boys sports staff, the news staff, the class room news staff, and the girls sports staff. Each division should have its own editor who is responsible to the managing editor

and the student editor or publisher for complete coverage of the material falling under his division.

These editors are responsible for a knowledge of all that is going on in their precincts and they make the assignments to the members of their staff in the assignment book which we will discuss later.

The boys sports staff is held responsible for all stories dealing with activities ranging from football and basketball to intramural tennis matches. The editor usually tries to assign his stories to people on the staff who know about the game they are to cover and are interested in that sport. This knowledge and interest are necessary if the coverage is to be accurate. In order to facilitate complete coverage, our editor not only has all schedules of the school sports but he makes it a policy to see all the athletic coaches and directors of boys sports activities once a week so he may obtain information.

The news staff is held responsible for all school activities, all club news and meetings, all school projects, and all incidental news relative to pupils, teachers, graduates, scholarships, and contests. She or he has a standing appointment for once a week with the dean, the guidance director, and with the principal so she may learn of any event that has not yet been announced. Most of the club activities are assigned to regular reporters; that is the reporter is given certain clubs for his beat and is given a schedule of the meetings, the names of the faculty advisers, and of the class officers to help him secure information.

This information is secured by his getting it from the adviser, by his attending the club meeting, and by his keeping in close contact with the club's publicity chairman if it has one. We have found that the most successful method is keeping in close contact with the adviser and the president for that enables us to get fairly complete coverages of future events and to obtain complete plans between meetings. Relying upon the club's publicity chairman is a risky business unless that chairman is unlike most of them we have known--hope none are present!--for they are not prompt in getting us the material.

The classroom news editor probably has the most painful job of all--or at least that is true of ours! It is the duty of this staff to cover all class news and we publish it in a column of items called *Notebook News*. This column includes humorous things that have happened in the classes, what the classes are studying, reports on tests though we try not to run into figures, reports that students are giving, accidents in classes such as industrial arts and gym, - anything else the teacher has to give, such as items about her home room pupils and what her classes are doing.

To garner this news, staff members are assigned certain beats; they visit every week each of the three or four teachers given to them and ask them specific questions such as: "Has anything amusing happened in your class this week? What are your classes studying now? Have you had any tests recently? Has anyone in your home room been out because of illness?" The reporter should always have specific questions in mind for if he appears for his conference and asks only the general question, "Have you any news?" the hurried-for-time teacher is only too prone to say, "No."

Class room news reporters are also asked to report anything amusing or clever that happens in the classes they attend. In this way, double coverage and some spice are secured. Such items as the following have appeared in the classroom news column in *The Northerner*:

Miss Gertrude Zook, Art 6, Period 6, was discussing fads recently and enlightened the class as to the origin of the fad for students' wearing sloppy clothing. "Carelessly dressed boys and girls," said Miss Zook, "are merely imitating the dress of the European peasant."

Miss Julia Storr's English 6 class, period 6, is memorizing several of Francis Bacon's famous quotations. Jack Fishing, aided by 34 other members of the class, recited his memory work last Thursday.

In Miss Julia Storr's English 6, period 4 class, John Utterback remarked sotto voice, "Milton wrote Paradise Lost; then his wife died and he wrote Paradise Regained."

Poem for Fred Ransbottom who suffered an explosion in period 1, Chemistry 2;

A little green chemist
On a summer day,
Some chemical mixed
In a green little way.

Now the green little grasses
Tenderly wave
Over the Chemist's
Green Little Grave.

In English 1, period 1, students were studying a selection from Norse mythology. When the teacher asked "What are Fens (swamps)?" John Grey answered, "People who live in Finland."

Our class room news editor usually gets all the beginners on the staff for her reporters. This introduces them to the art of news writing and subjects them to the tests every good reporter must pass--punctuality, acceptance of responsibility, and proper techniques of writing and preparing copy.

The girls sports editor covers all activities of the Girls Athletic Association, all intramural sports, and all contests between the girls basketball, tennis, softball, volleyball, and swimming teams. She, like the boys sports editor, has a conference with the girls athletic teachers and is responsible also for feature stories about outstanding girl athletes.

You say, why give so much space to such things? Because, *names make news*. As Earl Godwin, ace veteran Washington correspondent says, "I learned that news is of two varieties--the big important news that everyone reads and no one remembers; and the colorful little stuff that has in it the name of a neighbor. Everyone remembers it; the man involved cuts it out and pastes it in his scrap book."

Sometimes the knowledge that some girl has a stamp collection or the fact that a girl well known as a school actress plans to be a veterinarian is basis for a good news feature. Such material can be more systematically gotten, however, by conducting a hobby poll and by asking for detailed information. This makes good news feature copy for people are interested in other people and everyone likes to have his name in his school paper.

To expedite the getting of the stories, our editors have the yearly activities schedules, sports schedules for the year, club schedules for the year, and assembly schedules for the year. Since they are also given a schedule of the dates of our publications, it is an easy matter for them to see what major events and what minor ones are to be counted upon for the stories. Any thing they hear of in the dean's or principal's office is added to the schedule and they learn there also of any pending change. These schedules serve our editors as their future books.

From these schedules, all stories that are expected are put in the assignment books by the editors a week and one day before the paper they are for is to be issued. The page is divided in six columns; first, reporter to whom story is given; second, the story to be gotten and number or approximate size of the story expected; whom to see for story; date story is due to editor; place to check story out; place for reporter to check when story is turned in. The reporters of all staffs meet with the editors for discussion on the date they check their stories out; this serves two purposes: they may clarify any point not clear to them; the editor may ask them if they know of any stories not included that should be there. This procedure is carefully checked

each week by the student editor-in-chief and by the managing editor and they in turn add any information they find not there.

Complete coverage of the news demands a cooperative staff, cooperation of the faculty and administrators of the school, and news reporters that take their jobs seriously and have some of Dale Carnegie's information about "How to Win Friends and Influence People" as a basis for their dealings with the school public they serve. No paper can be a news paper without them and they must be taught that the value of the paper depends on their not loafing!

NOTES AND NOTICES

....The official *Advisers Bulletin* of the C.S.P.A. Advisers Association has been called to active duty again after going into retirement during the war years for the sake of paper conservation. This publication, distributed exclusively to members of the Advisers Association, is designed to carry timely articles and news of special interest to faculty advisers. It is dedicated to the exchange of ideas and information among those who guide the school press. We welcome all suggestions....all contributions. If you have something to say, say it here....

....After nearly four years of active military service, Dr. Murphy returned to his duties at Columbia University as of the first of November. Commissioned as a Captain of the Air Corps, he served first in Washington and Randolph Field with the Training Section, having much to do with the college-training program that laid the academic foundations for additional training leading to pilot, navigator and bombardier ratings.

In 1944 he was assigned to the Allied Commission for Italy and served as Education Officer, with headquarters at Naples, for all of southern Italy. Every Italian school from kindergartens through the Universities and technical institutes came under his supervision. When the Austrian campaign was being developed, he was selected as Education-Religious Affairs Officer for the American Military Government. He spent a year with the Vienna Area Command, having charge of schools and religious affairs in the American section of that city.

He was released from active duty in September and is now a Lt. Colonel in the Reserves.

....Pursuant to the requests of hundreds of advisers at the Convention last March, a committee has been diligently at work revising the old score book and suggesting acceptable new trends in newspaper content and technique. It may be possible to complete the project before the next judging period, so that publications of 1946-47 will be viewed on the basis of modernized standards. Mr. Lambert Greenawalt of William Penn High School, York, Pennsylvania is chairman of the committee on standards. He indicates that he will welcome any suggestions on the current project.

....As the product of years of experience in journalistic accounting, Mr. E. T. Burmahln of Lynchburg, Virginia, has prepared a monograph which serves as a guide to practical accounting for scholastic publications. The need for such a paper has long been felt. The Advisers Association has undertaken the task of publishing Mr. Burmahln's work, and members may look forward to receiving a copy---gratis---in the near future.

....If your letters to the C.S.P.A. Office do not receive the usual prompt reply, be patient. Fayerweather Hall, which houses the Association's headquarters, has been undergoing extensive repairs and alterations since last summer--in fact, practically every wall in the building has been knocked down and rebuilt somewhere else. Refusing the close down during the remodeling, the staff has held the fort against a small army of carpenters, plumbers, electricians, plasterers, painters, and what-have-you that marches in and out of 202, tearing up floors and radiators and playing checkers with the furniture. Furthermore, all but two of the college students comprising the staff, are fresh replacements recruited this semester. So if the answer to your letter is delayed a day or so, be patient--chances are some carpenter is sitting on it....

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